

TOPICS OF AN OLD-TIMER

Old-Timer Visits Hamilton After an Absence of more than Fifty Years—Scenes of His Boyhood Recalled—Did the First Touch of Work on the "Spectator," the Oldest Paper in Hamilton—"Billy" Cliff, a Companion of his Boyhood, visited—"Dan" McCarthy, an Old Toronto Friend, —Mrs. Bird and the Brick Family, —Who Built the First Catholic Church—John Nelligan, Son of Captain Nelligan, an Old Friend—Dennis Nelligan and Leonard the Twin Actor.

Old-Timer treated himself to an excursion to Hamilton last week and made much joy of the event. Reviving old memories, viewing old landmarks and observing changes in the scenes of one's boyhood days, are acts that are sacred to a man of sentiment. And to me this was an altogether sentimental journey. It was so long since I had lived in Hamilton that I had little expectation of meeting anyone I knew in the days of old. There was a bare possibility of my meeting an old printer or two, whose names and faces might be familiar to me; but I had little expectation of so doing. I calculated, however, that the recent publication of my Hamilton recollections in the "Register" and their republication in the "Daily Herald" would be of service to me, and I was not mistaken.

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My trip was by "Turbinia" and this expedited my journey. I do not remember the exact distance between Toronto and Hamilton. It used, I think, to be over forty miles in old times when the boats used to call at all the way places, such as Oakville and Bronte; but it is several miles less now, when no way stops are made. At any rate the time taken by the trip was about two-and-a-half hours. A beautiful water-walker is the "Turbinia," claimed to be the swiftest fresh water sailer in the world, without any rocking or rolling or mal de mer. But what a big battery of boilers that vessel has to be sure! No wonder she is fast. The day was not exactly a diamond, but bright enough to make distant objects visible, and the landscape was charming. Many objects that were new to me, such as factories and preserving houses, were visible, and marked progress, progress material and industrial, as well as financial.

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There was the same old landing place at the foot of John street—the Clay wharf, was it? No, that was further east, but what used to be Gunn's wharf, I think. But how time and other scenes deaden memory! There used to be a square, four-story building on the top of the hill that in other and earlier days was used for a soldiers' barracks. It used to be a striking object when the lower portion of the city was merely a commons! It is yet there, but seems to be reconstructed and devoted to other and more desirable purposes. I was disappointed at the appearance of Hamilton's harbor. It looks shabby. The same old mountain looks familiar, but it is not yet topped off with the palaces of the Dopes.

Christ's Church on James street, as you advance to the heart of the city, was a handsome edifice in early days, but it is replaced by another edifice—the Protestant Cathedral. Knox's Presbyterian Church is on a prominent corner on the same street, but evidently has undergone some architectural changes for the better. The old market-house and town hall, whose erection was superintended by Charles Durand, when town clerk, of old, is replaced by a much superior structure in the upper part of which are located the various city offices. There are additional buildings for various market purposes and on a good market day are abundantly supplied, as they were when I took a look at them, and I then thought of

the abundant times when apples and potatoes were sold there for a York shilling or 12½ cents, per bushel!

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The old engine house on King William street is supplemented with a tall tower. It is of brick and when first erected was used for town or police board meetings, town prison, and engine house. The date of its original erection was 1835, and its reconstruction 1883. Hamilton has now a much more imposing stone court-house and jail than when I went away, and is the third on the same spot, the first one having been built of logs. The post office is a fine, roomy building and is located on the south side of King street at the southwest corner of John street. The first hotel in Hamilton, which was kept by a man named Carey, was on this corner, but not occupying so much space. It was subsequently changed into stores and at the time of the rebellion in 1837, its occupants were accused of treason and they absconded.

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Of churches there are now many. Instead of the one little roughcast Catholic church, in the times of Vicar-Generals Macdonell and Gordon, there is a fine Cathedral, and three other substantial parish churches, and one new one building. I am told the first church was burned down, through the work of an incendiary. The old brick Methodist church on John street is still standing. This is one of the oldest. In my boyhood days someone in that neighborhood was the owner of a billy-goat that used to persist in escorting ladies for the length of a block to and from that church. Why his attentions were not summarily suppressed by the town authorities I never learned. But the oldest church edifice in Hamilton is the one down on King street east, at Wellington street. It belongs to the Methodist persuasion. I do not know but what the first hotel was in the same locality; but there is no sign of a hotel there now. "Tam" F. Lennox, a Scotch actor, who took a fancy to Hamilton, once kept that hotel, and "Tam" advertised "dishes in Scots and Paris styles."

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The "Gore" is still the "Gore," but it is now ornamented with flower gardens. Why King street was laid out with a gore in it is something I never learned and "Charley" Durand, who knew everything about old Hamilton, does not tell it. One of the principal structures on King street east is the "Waldorf" Hotel, which was formerly the "Anglo-American." The best hotel in Hamilton in the forties was the Royal Exchange, kept by one Nelson Devereaux, on the north side of King street, nearly opposite the Waldorf, or rather where that fine hostelry is built.

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I did not take up my pen this time, however, to write a description of Hamilton and its institutions. I may do this at another time. I was not surprised at the advances the "Ambitious" City has made. Indeed I expected greater. The boundaries, however, have extended far and wide and the population has increased from 3,000 or 4,000, what it was when I first knew it, to about 60,000—its present enumeration. The "mountain," which is table-land, is considered the health resort, and on it is located the Lunatic Asylum. I had the pleasure of climbing it and taking a "bird's eye view" from that famous locality of the city below and surrounding country, including the famous "Burlington Heights," and Dundas in its nest. I have heard it stated that General Simcoe, the first Governor of Upper Canada, was a Yorkshireman, and gave many places names borrowed from that celebrated shire, including York, now Toronto; Burlington Heights, now Hamilton; Saltfleet, Scarboro; Ancaster, etc. And, by the way, Dundas and Ancaster, were once

places of much more importance than Hamilton; but they are seldom heard of away from home at the present day.

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In visiting Hamilton I had some old-time claims upon it, but more especially its newspaper press. Hamilton has three first-class daily newspapers, all published in the evening. They are "The Spectator," the oldest; "The Times," the second in point of time; and "The Herald," the youngest and up-to-date. They form a group for a growing young city to be proud of. None of them belong to the old school of journals, which passed away with the Smiths, the Bulls and the Bregas. For spectacular purposes the writer might

with some assurance claim to take a foremost rank among the men that publish those great journals, for he did the first touch of work that was done on any of them in the year 1846, when "The Spectator" was is-

sued first as a semi-weekly journal, by the late Robert Smiley. It was issued as a daily in 1848, the second in Upper Canada. The first was the "British Whig" of Kingston, from which Mr. Smiley graduated. I wondered much if I could find one of my old-time associates of the "art preservative" alive and well in the Hamilton of to-day. But I did not wonder long, for I was asked by an "old boy" of "The Times" if I had seen Mr. William H. Cliff? This was a name that was dear to me, for Mr. Cliff was one of my boyhood companions in the early forties. I found him hale and hearty in his 79th year, and outdistancing all competitors in the race of years. This discovery was exceedingly gratifying to "Old-Timer," as he supposed his friend long since dead, as he had heard nothing of him for more than fifty years. He had been lately employed on the "Spectator," but had retired not very long since. His residence is with his daughter and son-in-law at 230 Herkimer street, where he enjoys his old age without the pangs of rheumatism or other ailments that beset humanity. I had an exceedingly enjoyable visit to the editorial rooms as well as the mechanical departments of the various papers, where I was treated with consideration and kindness. Space will not permit me to individualise in this article to any extent, but my obligations are due to Messrs. J. L. Lewis, the editor of the "Herald," and Mr. David Hastings, the city editor of the same paper; Mr. Cameron, the editor of the "Spectator," Mr. Allan, foreman of the composing room, and Mr. James R. Allan of the business office; also Mr. Geo. M. Bagwell and others of the "Times."

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I must not forget a visit I paid to that prince of good fellows, Daniel McCarthy, formerly of Toronto, an old friend of mine, and who has a host of friends here. Mr. McCarthy wears a white halo like myself, but is hearty. He is an officer of the Asylum, and climbs the rugged stairs to the mountain's top every day, to where the institution is situated, to the performance of his official duties. Mr. McCarthy has been connected with this institution for more than twenty years, and is well thought of, though not circulating so freely among friends as formerly in Toronto. Mr. Mc has three daughters living with him, and one son, a bright

young gentleman, who is chief clerk at the Waldorf Hotel. Two sons of his are connected with the Collier's Weekly publication house in New York. I had the pleasure of being Mr. McCarthy's guest during a part of the time of my Hamilton visit. His private residence is at 215 Main street west, which is on a rise of ground that was familiar to me in the long ago and close to the residence of the Hon. Sam Mills when alive. He and his family attend St. Joseph's church.

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Walking down King street west one morning as I did many a time in the long ago, I was overtaken by Mr. J. L. Lewis, editor of the "Herald," who informed me he had a letter for me. It contained an invitation from a lady, who had seen a notice of my presence in the city in one of the papers, to favor her with a call to talk over old times. She gave her address as 56 Walnut street. Walnut street was familiar enough to me before "the days of '49," when I left Hamilton, but I did not know the writer. The locality was a neighborhood where I once resided and anticipated meeting some long forgotten friend. I was not disappointed. She was Mrs. C. J. Bird, a daughter of the late John Brick, a former city

assessor. I had a most kindly reception from the lady, her husband, and grown-up son, a bright young man. This locality, be it remembered, was a choice part of old "Corktown," which was the Irish quarter. The Bricks were great people in Hamilton in the olden days. They were among the pioneer Irish settlers, and there were four brothers of them besides the father and several sisters. Brick is a peculiar name but it is not unknown to history. The Hamilton Bricks and the Fitzpatrick's built the first Catholic place of worship in Hamilton, which was dedicated to divine worship in 1840. The Bricks, led by their father, John Brick, came to Canada from Kerry, Ireland, in the year 1835. The sons were Timothy, John, Patrick and Robert. They were architects and builders, and enlightened and liberal men. Old Timer remembers them well and liked them. Before Hamilton was incorporated as a city Timothy Brick was one of the town board. John Brick was city tax-collector and a very popular man. Twenty years ago or more Thomas Brick was an alderman of the city, and to-day John Brick, a brother of Mrs. Bird, is a city collector, whose acquaintance I had the pleasure of making. Mrs. Bird has some interesting reminiscences of rebellion days, as her father was well acquainted with "Mike" Mills, brother of Hon. Samuel Mills, who was a leader in that ill-starred enterprise. She gave me the interesting information when I informed her of one of my old Hamilton homes, that I had lived on historic ground, for that was the old Mills homestead, situated on Cherry and Tyburn streets, within an orchard which has long since made way for homes. To me, Mrs. Bird's reminiscences were highly interesting and edifying, and

her and her husband's kindness and hospitality I shall not readily forget.

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Another acquaintance made that gave me great pleasure was that of John Nelligan, city assessor. His father was Captain Nelligan, commander of a lake vessel, who lost his life by the foundering of his ship. The date of this sad event I cannot now give. Mr. Nelligan was delighted when he learned that I knew not only his father, but also his mother and his mother's family, the Kileys. They were County Waterford people from the charming locality of the river Blackwater—I think from Tal-low. This is a hallowed region, made famous by such great names as those of Sir Walter Raleigh, the poet Spencer, the Countess of Desmond, who lived to be 140 years; the great Earl of Cork, Robert Boyle, the father of modern chemistry; Gen. Kean, and many other notables too numerous to mention. Mr. Nelligan is a young man of varied attainments, which include music and the drama. I was very happy to meet him on account of the associations his connexions called up. There was another Nelligan in Hamilton in the early days that this incident reminds me of. He was a hotel-keeper and was no relation to Captain Nelligan, the father of this friend. Once upon a time a noted Irish

comedian named Leonard visited Hamilton. He was also a barrister and a native of the same town in Kerry that Dennis Nelligan came from. "I know that man," said he to me, "and I am going to see him." I happened to be at the green room door when Denis Nelligan called to see his townsman of the old theatre at the corner of Rebekah and Catherine streets. When they met the one exclaimed "Leonard!" the other "Nelligan!" and threw their arms around each other in a fond embrace.

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The following copied from the "Saturday Musings" page of the Hamilton "Spectator" is descriptive of an incident of my late visit, I presume written by Mr. Butler, American consul, and one of the three old printers mentioned:

"It does not often occur in this life that three old boys who learned the printing trade in the '40s come together after a lapse of over half a century. Early in the '40s William Cliff, now a veteran of 78 years, learned the printer's trade in Hamilton under Solomon Brega, then the editor of the Journal and Express. At the same time William Halley, now 74, was an apprentice in Robertson's job office. Richard Butler, now 71, took his first lessons in a Montreal printing office in 1846, and from 1848 to 1850 worked in London on the Free Press and Prototype, and came to Hamilton in 1850 and worked on the Journal and afterwards on the Christian Advocate. Halley left Hamilton in 1849 and moved to Toronto, and early in the '50s came back here as resident agent for a Montreal type foundry. It has been more than half a century since he finally left Hamilton, and last Tuesday was his first visit back to this city. Neither Cliff nor Butler had met Halley in all those years, and the reunion that took place in the American consul's office was pleasant to the trio. The old days were lived over again for a brief hour. Names of printers who worked at case and hand-press, now long forgotten, were recalled. Tom McNamara, Mick Sweetman, Teddy Powers, Big Franks, John Robertson, Bob Gay, John Christian—"There were giants in those days." What memories those names recalled, and many a story was told. The three old boys forgot for the hour that they had passed the three score and

ten mile post in the journey of life and that at no remote day their last proof would be corrected and revised. William Halley told an interesting bit of history as to how the Spectator was started in this city in 1846: Robert Smiley was foreman of a department in the government printing office in Montreal, and hearing that there was a good opening for a Tory paper in this city, he came up to look the field over. There was already one Tory paper, the Gazette, but Mr. Bull, its editor, was a mild gentleman who wrote pleasant editorial paragraphs. The progressive Tories were belligerent and wanted a fighting editor, and Robert Smiley filled the bill. He had but little money and the party was not in a contributing spirit, so the outlook was not very bright. Two brothers in Toronto had brought an outfit of printing material and were preparing to publish a Reform paper, but they had a disagreement when the type for the first side of the first number was ready for the press. The paper was never printed, and as they wanted to close up the business Smiley leased the material and brought it to Hamilton, afterwards buying it. "Bill" Halley was a boy in John Robertson's job office, and as Robertson took the foremanship of the Spectator, Halley went with him and helped to get out the first number. The Spectator was successful from the start and made money for its owner. Inside of ten years Mr. Smiley had a fine printing office, machine presses and a bindery, and he owned the building on the corner of Hughson and Main streets, which he occupied as an office, and built Smiley Castle out in the middle of a field. The castle is now the residence of T. H. Pratt. He also bought a woolen mill in Ancaster,

and was on the top wave of prosperity when consumption ended his career. Robert Smiley died in 1855, eleven years after coming to Hamilton. In 1846 he was not worth \$500. When he died he left a good estate to be divided between his wife and two brothers. His heirs frittered everything away, and the building on the corner of Hughson and Main streets was recently sold under mortgage. Mr. Halley is writing some very interesting reminiscences of old times in Hamilton for the Catholic Register. He carries well his 74 years, and is as bright and chipper as in the old days.

The latter assertion, unfortunately, is not quite correct, as I have been an invalid for more than a year.

WILLIAM HALLEY.

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